I claim:

1. A method for controlling access to a multicast group in a data communication network, comprising:

providing a second node for transmitting data traffic between a first node and a router; and

verifying by the second node that the first node is authorized to access a multicast group before transmitting to the first node data traffic from the router addressed to the multicast group.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the verification includes authenticating the first node.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the verification further includes determining a multicast group authorization associated with the first node in connection with the authentication.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the verification includes authenticating a user on the first node.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the verification further includes determining a multicast group authorization associated with the first node in connection with the authentication.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the verification includes determining whether a multicast group in a message

received from the first node is in conformance with a multicast group authorization associated with the first node.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the verification includes determining whether a multicast group in a message received from the router is in conformance with a multicast group authorization associated with the first node.

8. A method for controlling access to a multicast group in a data communication network, comprising:

receiving an IGMP membership report from an end station;

determining whether a multicast group in the IGMP membership report conforms with a multicast group authorization associated with the end station; and

inhibiting the end station from joining the multicast group if the multicast group fails to conform with the multicast group authorization.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising receiving the multicast group authorization in response to verification of a credential submitted by the end station.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the credential is a user credential.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the association of the multicast group authorization with the end station is

inferred from an association of the multicast group authorization with a port through which the end station is known to access the network.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein the receiving, determining and inhibiting steps are performed on a LAN switch interposed between the end station and a router.

13. The method of claim 8, wherein the multicast group corresponds to an IP Multicast data stream.

14. A method for controlling access to a multicast group in a data communication network, comprising:

receiving a CGMP join message from a router regarding an end station;

determining whether a multicast group in the CGMP join message conforms with a multicast group authorization associated with the end station; and

inhibiting the end station from receiving traffic addressed to the multicast group if the multicast group fails to conform with the multicast group authorization.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving the multicast group authorization in response to verification of a credential submitted by the end station.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the credential is a user credential.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the association of the multicast group authorization with the end station is inferred from an association of the multicast group authorization with a port through which the end station is known to access the network.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein the receiving, determining and inhibiting steps are performed on a LAN switch interposed between the end station and a router.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein the multicast group corresponds to an IP Multicast data stream.

20. A LAN switch, comprising:

a port for receiving a membership report from an end station; and

a switch manager for receiving the membership report from the port, for determining whether a multicast group in the membership report conforms with a multicast group authorization associated with the end station and for inhibiting the end station from joining the multicast group if the multicast group fails to conform with the multicast group authorization.

21. The switch of claim 20, wherein the switch manager receives the multicast group authorization from an authentication server in response to verification by the

authentication server of a credential submitted by the end station.

22. The switch of claim 21, wherein the credential is a user credential.

23. The switch of claim 20, wherein the association of the multicast group authorization with the end station is inferred from an association of the multicast group authorization with the port.

24. A LAN switch, comprising:

a port for receiving a join message from a router regarding an end station; and

a switch manager for receiving the join message from the port, for determining whether a multicast group in the join message conforms with a multicast group authorization associated with the end station and for inhibiting the end station from receiving traffic addressed to the multicast group if the multicast group fails to conform with the multicast group authorization.

25. The switch of claim 24, wherein the switch manager receives the multicast group authorization from an authentication server in response to verification by the authentication server of a credential submitted by the end station.

26. The switch of claim 24, wherein the credential is a user credential.

27. The switch of claim 24, wherein the association of the multicast group authorization with the end station is inferred from an association of the multicast group authorization with a port through which the end station is known to access traffic from the router.